

wherein the thickness of the opposite side edge parts of the resin layer is smaller than that of the middle part thereof, whereby curling of side edges of the belt is prevented by suppressing differential thermal contraction between the base layer and the resin layer.

The criteria for determining distinctness between a process and apparatus, as set forth in the Manual of Patent Examination Procedure, require a comparison of the subject matter "as claimed." Here, a "papermaking machine" is recited in the preamble of claim 3, and referred to again in the body of the claim to qualify the relationship between the base layer and the resin layer. The body of the claim also refers to the machine by reciting that the belt is "for transporting a paper sheet along a path in the machine. . . ." As such, the recitation of the "papermaking machine" is a claim limitation since it does not merely state an intended use but also gives meaning to the claim. Moreover, dependent claims 5 and 11, which also closely track each other and which are dependent respectively on claims 3 and 9, recite rollers with cylindrical surfaces as specific papermaking machine components.

The belt, which is a component of the claimed apparatus, could, at least in theory, be used to transport coal to a boiler, as noted by the Examiner. However, one could hardly use a "papermaking machine" to transport coal, as the term "papermaking machine" implies the presence of pressing components (as shown in FIGs. 4 and 5 of the applicant's drawings) which would be inconsistent with practical coal transportation.

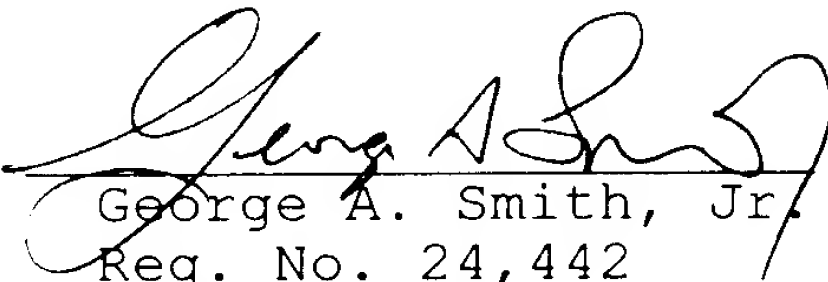
In view of the close relationship between the groups of claims, especially between claims 3 and 9 and between claims 5 and 11, the fields of search for both groups of claims would appear to be the same, or at least closely similar, since for both groups, it would be necessary to consider both material

transporting belt structures per se, as well as the obviousness of utilizing the belts, as defined, in the context of a papermaking machine.

For the above reasons, although claims 3-8 have been elected, the applicants respectfully request examination of all the claims.

Respectfully submitted,  
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